



Chapter 10

TOWARDS
A NEW EDUCATIONAL ORDER



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Education must liberate man from the shackles of cowardice, pettiness, greed, hate, narrow-mindedness, from the limits of I and mine....True education therefore is that which directs and counsels the mind and intellect of man towards the earning of pure happiness.

— Sri Sathya Sai Baba

The Goal of Education

Great educators and philosophers down the ages have time and again emphasized an important goal of education:

The self-actualisation of a person, and becoming fully human, i.e., the development of the fullest height that the human being can stand up to (A.H. Maslow, 1959)

An all-round drawing out of the best in child and man - body, mind and spirit (Mahatma Gandhi, 1956)

The all-round growth and development of the individual in harmony with the universal (Rabindranath Tagore, 1962).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms." The Convention of the Rights of the Child goes further. It calls for, "the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sex, and friendship among all peoples...."

From a more utilitarian perspective, the purpose of education is to develop competent and creative individuals, useful to the society; individuals who could contribute to the physical, intellectual, and aesthetic development of the society; individuals who

would be aware of their social, economic, and cultural environment, and could, with self-confidence, make the necessary adjustments to meet a constantly changing environment.

From whatever point of view one judges the purpose of education, the current system of education around the world leaves much to be desired. The emphasis in educational policies has been on academic achievement, preparing one to face the job market, and on gaining economic competitiveness at the national level. The growing intolerance that we see today in personal relationships, social conflicts and in wars between nations, in widespread crime and in corruption, exploitation and authoritarianism, has its roots in the prevailing education system. This system has been painstakingly designed to serve the market rather than the society and it gives excessive emphasis on earning a living rather than on the blossoming of human excellence and values that help individuals to live together.

The Current Global Scenario

As the world races towards a knowledge society, it is often forgotten that knowledge is but a milepost on the road to wisdom. Knowledge is increasingly identified with scientific progress and technological breakthroughs and the role of culture in transferring traditional knowledge, values and spirituality across generations is diminished. Educational policymakers increasingly

Education is a great constructive force for mankind. But reformers and reconstructionists have tinkered so much with the process of education that it has now been reduced to a caricature of itself. The effectiveness of the educational system, and the boons it could confer on man have been ignored and neglected; the name is now given to the art of collecting information of the objective world. The far more important task of transforming the nature of man into the divine is given up, as beyond its ken.

— Sri Sathya Sai Baba

find themselves overwhelmed by the ambition of governments to build a 'new economy' based on a new technological paradigm rather than a 'new society' that could bring harmony and peace in this world.

In its report, the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century (Jacques Delors Commission, 1997), outlined a grim picture of the global scenario in the twenty-first century which would indeed be a cause for concern to every educational policy maker.

To mention just a few aspects, this is a scenario of:

- growing tension on many fronts
- rising inequality due to progress that has not been equally shared
- smouldering tension between nations and ethnic groups
- tension between tradition and modernity
- declining respect for human values and relationships and for natural resources.

The report underscores two new forces at work in the society in the new millennium. First, the fear for loss of roots in a globalising culture: How does globalisation affect personal identity which is the beginning point for personal development? Does it blur community identity which is the building block for cultures? How does the inclusion of new cultures affect national heritage?

Second, equally disruptive but often less apparent is the tension caused by an overabundance of transient information to the current generation of youth. Public opinion is constantly focused on immediate problems, be it terrorism or war or even isolated incidences of crime, calling out for immediate solution to problems which, in reality, can only be addressed through gradual reforms of the underlying forces in society. This is where educational policies should be deeply concerned.

The link between education and jobs has to be broken. Education should be for life and not for living. It should prepare youth for all the responsibilities of citizenship.... Academic knowledge alone is of no great value. It may help one to earn a livelihood. But education should go beyond preparation for earning a living. It should prepare one for the challenges of life morally and spiritually.

— Sri Sathya Sai Baba

One should enter into society to serve the society and to serve the nation; make your life an ideal one, give up selfishness and self-interest. Only when the society is happy can you be happy. All your joys and sorrows depend upon the society. If society is not happy an individual can never be happy. Therefore you should continuously aspire for the welfare and prosperity of the society.

— Sri Sathya Sai Baba

The Search for a New Educational Order

Educational reforms over the past several decades have been searching for a "new educational order" to address many of these issues. Addressing the major challenges facing education in the 1970s, the International Commission on the Development of Education (The Faure Commission, 1972), wrote in its report: "The physical, intellectual, emotional, and ethical integration of the individual into a complete man is a broad definition of the fundamental aim for education". The underlying idea was that only such a complete man would be equipped to deal with the challenges facing the world.

A quarter of a century later the Jacques Delors Commission went a step further to reaffirm its belief that, "Education should contribute to

every person's complete development — mind and body, intelligence, sensitivity, aesthetic appreciation and spirituality." The Commission also saw education, "as one of the principal means available to foster a deeper and more harmonious form of human development and thereby to reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war."

The growing concern for a, "more harmonious form of human development" brought to focus the need for harmonising science with humanism, ethics with aesthetics, and material welfare with spiritual welfare, in the curriculum so that education could prepare children for the challenges of life in a balanced manner in all aspects — temporally, morally, and spiritually.

**Education without character,
Commerce without morality,
Politics without principles,
Science without humanity,
Religion without love,
Administration without justice,
Knowledge without application,
Patriotism without sacrifice,
Are not only useless but positively dangerous**

— Sri Sathya Sai Baba



Japan

A Renewed Emphasis on Values

Thus we see new emphasis on social, moral, and spiritual values in curricular reforms in countries around the world. In the UK, the National Curriculum for England 2000 has included a statement of values to promote spiritual, moral, social, and cultural (SMSC) education. In Australia, the Adelaide Declaration on the objectives of schooling in the twenty-first century lays emphasis on social, moral and spiritual development as much as on intellectual and physical development. In Thailand, a key objective of the National Education Plan (2002-2016) is to build a society of morality, wisdom, and learning. In post-apartheid South Africa, the constitutional values of truth, tolerance, and solidarity are driving educational reforms.

This renewal of emphasis on values in education needs to be seen as much more than, "a longing

(of the world), often unexpressed, for an ideal and for values...", as viewed by Delors. It needs to be viewed as an imperative, that the world has gradually come to realise, to eliminate increasing religious fanaticism, violence, and fatalism that characterise today's society. For this to happen, an education policy has to foster universal and eternal values that could promote the unity and integration of people in a culturally plural society.

More importantly, education needs to provide, more than ever, a clear and a practical process of how to translate these values into a daily reality, both at the individual and societal level. Education needs to "uplift" minds and spirits to the plane of the universal, in some measure, to transcend themselves, as eloquently espoused by Delors Commission. The Commission goes on to say: "the survival of humanity depends thereon."

There is, therefore, every reason to place renewed emphasis on the moral and cultural dimensions of education, enabling each person to grasp the individuality of other people and to understand the world's erratic progression towards a certain unity, but this process must begin with self-understanding through an inner voyage whose milestones are knowledge, meditation and the practice of self-criticism.

— *Education: the Necessary Utopia*, by Jacques Delors

In the Report of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century

The sacred qualities that originate from the heart are true and eternal. They correspond to the inward path (Nivritti), whereas all the worldly tendencies like amassing wealth, taking up jobs, playing games, desiring for positions of authority, etc., correspond to the outward path (Pravritti). Worldly tendencies originate from the head and are bound to change. Only the inward tendencies that originate from the heart are true and eternal. One who follows the inward path will never become frustrated or restless. One who follows the outward path can never attain permanent happiness.

— Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Sathya Sai Education: A Pathway for Transformation

It is in this context that the role of Sathya Sai Education is worth a revisit. How can educational policy making in the twenty-first century be enriched by Sathya Sai Education? In what ways can Sathya Sai Education add value to educational policy objectives of all-round and balanced development of the human personality? How can Sathya Sai Education contribute to building a society that upholds the universal ideals of peace, freedom, and social justice?

In a rapidly changing world, where people are searching for roots and a sense of belonging, an important task of education is to help people to gain a stable identity. This can happen only when people can relate to values that are independent of time and space. The renewed emphasis on values in recent years could be viewed in this light. By eliciting the universal and timeless human values of love, peace, truth, right conduct and nonviolence,

which bring together the profound moral insights of the world's great enduring civilisations, Sathya Sai Education helps to create a universal and unchanging frame of reference to give one a stable sense of identity.

An understanding of this calls for a more in-depth consideration of the term "spirituality". The term has increasing mention in the national curriculum of a number of countries, but seldom does it find expression in curricular substance or in teaching and learning resources. Spirituality is a process that guides one to Self-knowledge, or the knowledge of Self. This is the realisation of one's relationship and bond with the Divine, the ultimate reality. Knowledge sees diversity in unity while Self-knowledge sees unity in diversity. Sociologists point out that the only way that all men may harmoniously relate themselves together, would be their common identification with the Divine.

Education can claim success only when it results in the student gaining awareness of the Divinity inherent in him and others. No academic degree can confer as much self-confidence and self-satisfaction, and lead man as quickly to self-sacrifice and self-realisation, as that awareness.

— Sri Sathya Sai Baba



Ecuador

An understanding of spirituality helps to understand the universal and eternal human values as they truly originate from this ultimate reality and absolute Truth - by whatever name people in different cultures may relate to it.

Character: The Goal of Sathya Sai Education

This brings us to *Learning To Be*, one of the four pillars of education defined in the report of the International Commission. In the most inclusive sense, *To Be* refers to developing the *whole human being*, or a balanced development of the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual domains to endow one with an integrated personality.

By combining spiritual education with secular education in an integral manner, Sathya Sai Education lays the foundation for developing an integrated personality. Sri Sathya Sai Baba has referred to it as the harmonious development of a sharp intellect endowed



Japan

with fundamental discrimination; a kind, compassionate heart with love for all; and competent hands that serve selflessly. Such a personality is the combination of nobility and ability. Sri Sathya Sai Baba says, "Nobility without ability is useless to society and ability without nobility is dangerous to it."

The most important manifestation of this *whole human being* or an integrated personality is character, and that is the goal of Sathya Sai Education. The human values of Love, Truth, Peace, Right Conduct, and Nonviolence provide the foundation for character, which in turn manifests itself as unity in thought, word, and deed, in selfless service and love for all. Character alone confers the ability to exercise objectivity and a sense of personal responsibility to attain common goals of the society. Information, knowledge, and skills gained through secular education are important tools and are prerequisites for righteous action, but these become ineffective when the personality lacks character.

Character stands for self-discipline, loyalty, readiness to accept responsibility, and willingness to admit mistakes. It stands for selflessness, modesty, humility, willingness to sacrifice when necessary and, in my opinion, faith in God.

— General Mathew B. Ridgeway,
U.S. Army, Supreme Commander of the U.N. Forces in Korea



USA

Through the inculcation of spiritual insight, Sathya Sai Education provides the foundation for a noble, able, and stable character, or the development of an integral personality, the *whole human being*. All positive educational goals become achievable when the end of education is viewed as the development of character.

Education: Not for Mere Living But for a Worthwhile Life

Viewed in this context, by defining the relationship that binds individuals in a society, Sathya Sai Education may yet prove to be the best way for *Learning to Live Together - the third pillar of learning referred to in the report of The Faure Commission (1972)* - and a key challenge for education in the twenty-first century. Rather than focusing only on the narrow self-interest of interdependence and common risks and challenges, Sathya Sai Education can raise the mind and the spirit to see true unity in diversity from a perspective that transcends differences in cultures, ethnicity, and belief systems.

The recent trend of including citizenship in curriculums in many countries is a case in point. It is now well-recognised that education has an important role to play in equipping future citizens

with a sense of civic responsibility and willingness to serve the society. Yet, we see that education is in a state of crisis in many countries today with extreme disruption in classrooms. There is a growing sense of desperation among teachers who are unable to contain the tide of non-education happenings in schools. In such a situation, introducing citizenship as an additional subject in the classroom by providing information and developing related skills could hardly be expected to inculcate among students the virtues of civic responsibility or service to society.

Clearly what is needed is not mere information but a change in attitude of the students from one of apathy and cynicism to respect for others and towards duty to society. Such a transformation has to begin with introspection, or by looking inwards and developing a true perspective of one's own identity, one's relationship with the world around, and finally with the ultimate reality. This is how Truth manifests and from this realisation of "oneness of all existence", flows selfless love that recognises unity in diversity. Once the human value of love is actualised in a person, it becomes a mighty force, both constructive and creative, manifesting itself in selfless service and good citizenship, compassion and humanism, tolerance and patriotism, ultimately towards the full blossoming of human excellence.

Education must instill the fundamental human values; it must broaden the vision to include the entire world and all mankind. Education must equip man to live happily, without making others unhappy, to evaluate things, pleasure and possessions correctly and without prejudice, and fix one's attention ever on the highest and the most precious achievement of all, the Atmic (Divine) victory.

— Sri Sathya Sai Baba

This, in short, is the dynamics of *Educare* and this is where Sathya Sai Education becomes important and relevant to educational policy-making in every society. Through its philosophy of *Educare* and the pedagogy of integral education, Sathya Sai Education provides a clear pathway to a fundamental transformation in the society that has remained an elusive goal of education.

Sathya Sai Education was born more than forty years ago when Sri Sathya Sai Baba gave a new and higher direction to education by saying, "Education is not for mere living; it is for life, a fuller life, a more meaningful life, a more worthwhile life."

Since then Sathya Sai Education has grown, under Sri Sathya Sai Baba's guidance, to be a life-long learning and transformation process embracing all kinds and levels of education and now covers more than 90 countries spread over every region of the world. Based on the philosophy of *Educare* and the sound pedagogy of *Integral Education* evolved over decades, Sathya Sai Education is today a beacon of hope in a despairing world. It is now recognised the world over as a major contribution in the field of education, and perhaps the best realisation of "the Necessary Utopia" envisioned by Jacques Delors in the report of the International Commission for Education in the Twenty-first Century.

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